



House of SpeakEasy

WRITERS + AUDIENCES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Name: Paul Morris, House of Speakeasy

Phone: 347.413.4889

Email: paul.morris@houseofspeakeasy.org

House of SpeakEasy Receives Transformative Multi-Year Grant from Helen Frankenthaler Foundation to Support New Artmobile Initiative

New York, NY—October 5: House of SpeakEasy is excited to announce a new programming initiative made possible by a multi-year grant from the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation. The \$100,000 award will support the launch of an “artmobile”—an expansion of SpeakEasy’s Bookmobile program—to bring the arts, art books and art-related titles, and programming tied to the visual arts to a range of communities across New York City in the fall of 2020 and continuing over a two-year period.

The Helen Frankenthaler Foundation supports the artist’s legacy through promoting the visual arts via a range of philanthropic, educational, and research programs. House of SpeakEasy is one of several initiatives being funded to enhance equity and access to the arts, among grants to **ArtsConnection**, **ArtTable**, **Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture**, **Studio Institute**, and **The Studio Museum in Harlem** to support digital initiatives and professional advancement opportunities for students and recent graduates.

“We are absolutely thrilled to be able to fulfill our mission of connecting communities with writers and artists,” said Board Chair Lucas Wittmann. “SpeakEasy believes that book ownership is a right, not a privilege.” Co-Founder Amanda Foreman added, “Our bookmobile, known as the Billy Truck in honor of its first funder, Billy Rayner, distributes books to some of the most underserved communities in the country. And now, thanks to the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, our literary and arts programming can expand just at the moment it’s needed most.”

House of SpeakEasy Executive Director, Paul Morris has already begun the work: “During the quarantine, we were already working on ways to bring the Bookmobile, writers, and books back into the communities we serve, safely and thoughtfully. Now, with increased resources, we can expand our operations, continue to build our network of writers, and develop meaningful collaborations with existing arts programs.”

SpeakEasy’s Bookmobile has been in operation since 2017, delivering books and book culture to areas of New York City that have been overlooked by traditional arts programming—areas such as Fordham Plaza in The Bronx, Corona Plaza in Queens, and Little Haiti in Flatbush, Brooklyn. In 2019, the Bookmobile went on its first national road trip, traveling 4,000 miles across 14 states, distributing over 5,000 free books in 18 towns and cities.

Guided by an advisory committee of artists and writers that includes **Rachel Eliza Griffiths, Marlon James, Mira Jacob, Tracy O’Neill, Kwanza Osajyefo, Youmna Chlala, Kristen Radtke, Danica Novgorodoff, Idra Novvey**, and in collaboration with arts nonprofits and publishers **ArtBridge, Pioneer Works, D.A.P., BOMB Magazine, The Believer, Guernica, Illustoria**, and others, SpeakEasy will identify neglected and underfunded communities with this new initiative. Through the new artmobile initiative, the Bookmobile will be able to distribute thousands of art-related books to aspiring young artists and visual storytellers. It will also deliver much-needed arts opportunities including talks, workshops, and readings to New York City youth.

SpeakEasy will develop strategic partnerships with organizations already engaged in local arts programming for children and teens to further deepen and enrich their work. It will bring added value in the form of books and access to its SpeakTogether program, which has operated college readiness, writing workshops, and live writers’ matinees in high schools, for the past seven years. Through a series of activations and deployments across the city in conjunction with the Department of Transportation and the New York City Housing Authority, from public exhibitions and gallery visits to artists’ talks and student art workshops, the SpeakEasy artmobile initiative seeks to inspire future generations of creators and to highlight the connections that exist between the visual and literary arts.

For more information about House of SpeakEasy and its other literary programming, and to stay up-to-date on the latest news related to the artmobile initiative, please visit www.houseofspeakeasy.org.

House of SpeakEasy Foundation is a 501(c)(3) literary arts nonprofit dedicated to the idea that literature matters, and that the essence of literary culture is the relationship between writers and readers. To foster that relationship, SpeakEasy seeks to elevate authors and promote their books, ensure they are paid for their work, and to stimulate and inspire audiences and readers. On Stage. In Schools. On the Road.

The Helen Frankenthaler Foundation advances the artist's legacy and inspires a new generation of practitioners through a range of philanthropic, educational, and research initiatives. Established and endowed by Helen Frankenthaler during her lifetime, the Foundation became active in 2013 and has continued to strategically expand its program, which includes organizing and supporting significant exhibitions of the artist's work, fostering new research and publications, and advancing educational initiatives in partnership with arts organizations around the world.